

tailors, seamstresses and mothers are busy during the days preceding the celebration in their preparation, something which resembles our own habit of appearing in new clothing on Easter. 294 855 796

As in the case of seamstresses, a number of women belonging to the poorer households find casual employment as laundresses to those who can afford the expense. There is no specific "wash day," just as there are no fixed periods in the home for changing clothing or linen. A laundress may be called whenever enough soiled clothing warrants her appearance. Almost every larger dwelling contains a tank or tub, usually submerged in the level of the court, for a multiplicity of purposes, among them washing dishes, bathing infants, and laundry. For washing, coarse laundry soap obtained from the general merchants (no domestic soap is made) is used, or water alone. Such laundering involves pounding and wringing on the stones beside the tank, and garments washed too often in this fashion soon show signs of wear. In one's experience, a handkerchief, which had withstood perhaps two years of cleansing in the United States, rapidly deteriorated after two trips to the laundress in Rowanduz, and it was similar with other items of apparel. Appreciative of this, laundry is not done by the townspeople with the regularity known in Northern Europe or America. Dry cleaning is unknown, and, to their chagrin, the woolen suits of the officials go into the tank with everything else. One such official, a Baghdadi by origin, possessed a suit with two pairs of trousers, one [352] [415] [388]

*Heating . Washing up . Laundering . Cleaning . Bed making*

51

*Washing up and laundering.* All washing up is done in cold, running water, very thoroughly and carefully, nothing being used except the white household soap also used for washing clothes. The sole domestic utensils that come into contact with boiling water are the tea glasses whilst tea is being served. Clothes are washed in hot water, soap flakes or white and brown household soap being used. Water for the washing of clothes is, in the villages, boiled in a rice pot over a fire in the courtyard, and the clothes are rinsed in cold spring water at one of the basins. Clothes might be hit against a stone or beaten with a wooden bat. Incidentally, few of the materials used for dresses were suitable for washing. The materials with metal worked into them, the coloured silk and artificial silk materials, lost a good deal of their beautiful appearance when coming into contact with soap and water. Those best suited were naturally the white and dark flowered cotton stuffs. In fact the cleanliness that constitutes an aesthetic factor in our mode of dressing is unknown to the Kurdish woman. It was said that in the olden days, before European soap a grass root or soap root was used. Articles of clothing are kept in metal chests, with tobacco inside against moths.

Ironing is done with an iron filled with glowing charcoal or, in towns like Kirkuk and Sulaimani, with an electric iron. There are no ironing boards. Ironing is performed on the floor with a carpet as underlay, the ironer on her haunches. A table and standing position is the exception, the squatting working position being preferred.

*Cleaning.* As there were no wooden floors in the homes I lived in, I found that a floor cloth was something seldom seen, and used only on tiles in Sulaimani. Clay floor, courtyards and roofs were swept with a brush, *grzi*, (E. 2270), made of two palm leaves tied together, the ribs of which were all laid on the same side and sewn together so that it resembled a fan, 0.40 m. long and 0.27 m. broad. The brush, which is quite cheap and quickly worn out, is bought in the *sûq*. The dust swept up, the dirt and refuse can, for example, be put in a petrol can and emptied. During work the woman moves on her haunches across the floor, sweeping away from, not towards, her. In the summer all floors are daily sprayed with water or, as in Sulaimani, watered with a hose in order to clean the floor, to create coolness and, particularly, humidity in the extremely dry air. Rugs and underlying mats, which at the beginning of summer are rolled off the floor and stacked on a wooden bench in some room in the house, are filled with clay dust, which the duststorm whirls about, but there is no carpet beating.

*Bedmaking.* Made beds do not exist as a constant factor. As formerly mentioned, women make the beds each evening and remove them in the morning. The iron bedsteads there may be in the house stand during the day like bare skeletons on the loggia, the roof, or wherever the family has elected to sleep at night during the summer heat. In the villages common beds are arranged with branch-covered laths, resting, for example, on four petrol cans. Generally, a "bed" merely consists of a mat on which a cotton mattress is rolled out. For covering a quilt is used, with or without the sewn-on, envelope-shaped, cotton cover, which is not adapted for changing as it has to be unstitched. Under sheets are rare. The pillow is a cylindrical cushion. If there is any kind of pillow case it is of cotton and shaped like a cuff around the middle of the cushion. It is not meant to be changed, either.